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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 001043

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KINSHASA FOR BRAZZAVILLE; EUCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

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TAGS: PGOV PREL IV

SUBJECT: GBAGBO HARDENS RHETORIC ON PEACE PROCESS

REF: ABIDJAN 1037

Classified By: DCM V. VALLE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (U) In a September 14 speech to senior officers and other members of the Ivoirian Defense and Security Forces (FDS) that was later televised, President Gbagbo delivered a hard-line, uncompromising message on the peace process. Gbagbo averred that he had made numerous compromises (including 23 amendments to Ivoirian law) to implement Linas Marcoussis and other agreements for the sake of peace. However, he had been disappointed each time as the New Forces continued to refuse to disarm. Gbagbo was harshly critical of the International Working Group, who he said were all too willing to sacrifice Ivoirian laws and the Ivoirian constitution and jettison the country's duly elected representatives, starting with Gbagbo himself. The President declared that he would not yield to these demands ("No to the farce of the IWG!" according to the headline in Abidjan's leading daily, "Fraternite Matin") and announced that he would not attend or send a representative to the UN Secretary General's (SYG) meeting on Cote d'Ivoire scheduled for September 20 in New York.

¶12. (C) Despite his harsh rhetoric, however, Gbagbo left the door open for international mediation, making positive comments about the role the African Union (AU) has played in the Ivoirian crisis. Gbagbo commented that each time there has been progress in advancing the peace process, it has been the result of an African initiative. He said he would ask the AU's Peace and Security Council to convene to make specific proposals to address the Ivoirian crisis. The Peace and Security Council is already scheduled to hold a meeting on Cote d'Ivoire in New York just before the SYG's meeting, and the UNSC is likely to take its cue from the AU's recommendations as it has done before. Gbagbo's remarks likely represent an effort to jockey for a stronger position for himself in the run-up to the meetings in New York. They are also meant to put the opposition and the international community on notice that he has no intention of leaving once his current, UNSC-approved mandate expires on October 31 or even of accepting a reduction of his executive authority in favor of the Prime Minister.

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